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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000392

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#) [IRAO](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE EYING MODEST CONTRIBUTION TO IRAQI

TRAINING, NOTHING MORE IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: USNATO 69

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES P. RIES FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

**¶11.** (C) Summary. Greece is weighing the removal of the caveat that prevents Greek officers assigned to the NATO staff from serving in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), and is also considering an unidentified contribution to the training of Iraqi security forces, according to a mid-level MFA official. Although Greece supports ISAF's mission in Afghanistan, political and economic constraints make it impossible for Greece to increase its role in ISAF beyond what it has now committed. End Summary.

NTM-I: We'll Help in Our Own, Small Way

**¶12.** (C) Poloff met with MFA NATO Division Deputy Director Theodore Daskarolis February 7 to review the status of Greek participation in NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan in the run-up to Secretary's February 9 visit to NATO HQ and the informal NATO Defense Ministerial in Nice. As a matter of principle, the United States believed Greece should allow Greek officers serving in NATO billets to take part in NTM-I, as necessary. As a practical matter, poloff added, the United States agreed with SYG de Hoop Scheffer that all allies should make some type of national contribution to the training mission. Noting the Greek government's positive statement about the January 31 Iraqi elections and widespread media coverage of the Secretary's positive discussions with European leaders, including German Chancellor Schroeder, poloff emphasized the importance of Greece removing itself from the list of a small handful of allies that were doing nothing to help out in Iraq. Asked whether the United States was looking for symbolism or substance, poloff said both were needed and, to date, Greece had provided neither.

**¶13.** (C) Daskarolis replied that Iraq was not a high priority for the Greek government, which had opposed military action there from the outset. Nonetheless, he said, Greece would do what it could to assist. On what Daskarolis called the "symbolic" question of Greek NATO officers serving in NTM-I billets, Daskarolis said he was aware of discussions about lifting this caveat, but knew of no change in the government's position yet. (Note: MFA's Secretary General told Ambassador January 28 that we should expect a decision "in days." End Note) On the issue of a more "concrete" Greek contribution to the training of Iraqi security personnel, Daskarolis said Greece would "do something," but could not offer specifics on the form this assistance would take or when his government would be ready to announce it. Whatever Greece did, he said, it would not happen inside Iraq. Greece had, from the outset, opposed training within Iraq. Poloff replied that, while the United States believed training within Iraq was the most effective way to accomplish NATO's goal of improving the capabilities of Iraq's security forces, other allies had taken a different approach. While we questioned the relative efficiency of out-of-country training, even this was better than the nothing that Greece was currently doing.

Afghanistan: We're Doing All We Can

**¶14.** (C) Noting the Greek pledge of a Role II medical facility for ISAF, poloff said additional European -- including Greek -- contributions would be needed as ISAF sought to expand its mandate to the south of Afghanistan. Daskarolis said it was unlikely that Greece would be able to do more there "in the short, medium, or long term." Already, he pointed out, the decision to send a medical team had been criticized in parliament, and the 6 million euro cost was difficult to cover in a time of budgetary difficulties. Poloff commented that Greece was not the only ally with budget problems, emphasizing the importance of the alliance succeeding in Afghanistan.

Comment

**¶15.** (C) Daskarolis is far from the final word on what Greece's participation in Iraq and Afghanistan will look like. Nonetheless, his perspective that Iraq and, to a

lesser extent, Afghanistan are not central to Greek interests, is representative. We are confident that Greece will come around on caveats, if only to avoid being left alone on the issue, and will eventually agree to increase its contributions to alliance efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will continue to send the message that, if they want to be seen as responsible allies, partners, and members of the UNSC, the Greeks will have to bring something to the table on issues like these.

RIES